



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
FAMILY INDEPENDENCE AGENCY  
LANSING



MARIANNE UDOW  
DIRECTOR

December 23, 2004

Nolan Finley  
Editorial Page Editor  
Detroit News  
615 W. Lafayette  
Detroit, MI 48826

Dear Mr. Finley:

Your story on December 23 about the tragic death of Jasmine Adia Lawrence-Phillips, *State misses chance to save baby*, describes a tragic situation that is a great sadness to all of us in the Family Independence Agency.

In all situations when a child who has had contact with our agency dies or experiences serious harm, I believe it is essential that we thoroughly investigate the situation and determine if there was more we could have done to protect a child and prevent a terrible outcome. FIA staff are enormously dedicated and caring individuals who have difficult jobs and who are constantly trying to balance all the facts and circumstances in a situation to make recommendations on child safety and well being. There are many complexities in these situations and we must understand the entire situation in every case we review.

In this case, I have asked our Oakland County FIA Director and her staff to examine all contacts this child and family had with our agency to better understand whether any of our policies, systems, procedures or processes need strengthening. I will also ask the Children's Ombudsman's office to review the thoroughness of our response to provide us with an outside, objective opinion of any opportunities we have to improve.

Despite our best efforts, we know that tragedies like this will occur. It is a reality that hundreds of our state's protective services workers face everyday as they try to balance the best interests and safety of a child without violating the parent's rights. Unfortunately, we serve thousands of Michigan children every year. Most are able to remain in or return safely to their homes. However, a death or serious injury to even one child is something we must do everything we can to prevent.

Marianne Udow  
Director, Family Independence Agency